

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Brookline,
Massachusetts**

May 18, 2011

The President. Thank you. All right, everybody, have a seat. That food looks too good to let it get cold. [*Laughter*]

To Frank [John]* and Eileen, first of all, I remember that drive, and I came away just having enjoyed the conversation. And that's not always the case when you're out there on the campaign trail—you're doing work. But I couldn't think of a more wonderful couple and people who I would've wanted to have dinner with even if I weren't running for office. [*Laughter*] And for you guys to open up your homes like this is just remarkable. I do appreciate you padding the crowd; basically, half of these folks are your children or grandchildren based on what I saw earlier. [*Laughter*] But thank you very much.

To all the other cohosts who worked so hard, friends that I've seen, some of whom have supported me since I ran for the United States Senate and nobody could pronounce my name. And so I appreciate all of you. To my dear friend, Deval, one of the finest Governors in the country, to Tom Menino, one of the finest mayors in the country, and to Speaker DeLeo for putting up with Mayor Menino and Deval Patrick—[*laughter*—we are grateful for you.

We live in extraordinary times. And I just came back from a large event that we did, and what was especially fun about it was Bill Russell was the person who introduced me. And they're erecting a statue for Bill Russell. He had always resisted any monument here in Boston, and the reason he agreed was because we encouraged everybody to set up a mentorship program in his name along with the statue, which is typical of who he is.

But I tried to remind people of the fact that on that night in 2008 when I was elected, I warned people that this was the beginning, not the end, that we were going to have a steep mountain to climb.

Now, we didn't realize how steep it was going to be. [*Laughter*] We didn't know at the time that we were going to go through the worst recession since the Great Depression and that we had already lost 4 million jobs in the previous 6 months and we would lose another 4 million in the few months after I was sworn in. We didn't know that the financial system would begin to melt down in ways that threatened the entire global capital system. We didn't know how severely the housing market would be hit. We didn't know that the auto industry would come this close to liquidation.

But what we did know was that the country was at a crossroads, even before the crisis had hit. What we understood was that we had gone through a decade in which corporate profits were up. On the surface it seemed that the country was growing and expanding. But if you talked to ordinary folks, day to day, they were just barely making ends meet. Incomes, wages, had flatlined for a decade. In fact, they had actually declined slightly when you adjusted for inflation. And people felt as if the American Dream was slipping away. They were working harder and harder, and they felt like they were just treading water.

* White House correction.

And there was a sense that it was no longer possible for us to do big things, that the political system had entirely bogged down, and whether it was trying to rebuild our infrastructure or make sure that we had a health care system that worked for every American or schools that taught every child, that somehow even if we understood what the answers might be technically, we just couldn't mobilize ourselves to actually bring about the changes that were needed.

And that's why I ran for President, and that's why so many of you supported me. Now, we have spent the last 2½ years cleaning up a big mess. And some of the decisions we took were tough. We had to move swiftly, we had to move boldly, and sometimes they were controversial. But an economy that was shrinking at about 6 percent is now growing again. Over the last 14 months, we've created 2 million private sectors jobs, starting to recover some of those jobs that were lost during the crisis. The financial system is stable. The stock market has doubled. We're on track to enjoy in manufacturing, for example, some of the fastest growth and greatest expansion that we've seen in about a decade.

But some of those underlying challenges are still there. And so our work isn't done. Yes, we passed health care with an assist from a former Massachusetts Governor. [Laughter] Great idea. [Laughter] But we still have to implement it.

And implementation is going to be difficult because part of our task is not just making sure that 30 million people have health care, but that we're starting to get a better bang for our buck: that we're driving down our costs, just like Massachusetts is now working on; working on delivery system reform; making sure that the 20 percent of patients who are chronically ill but account for 80 percent of the costs, that they're getting better care; making sure that health IT is working so that the system is more efficient and has less waste. That's going to require us rolling up our sleeves and paying attention to the hard details of policy.

We've made progress when it comes to energy: made the largest investment in clean energy in our history through the Recovery Act and have created entire industries. The advanced battery manufacturing sector used—we used to have 2 percent of the world's share of advanced batteries. We are now on track to have 40 percent of that market as a consequence of the investments we made. You're seeing solar panels and wind turbines manufacturing. Deval was just telling me that the wind testing facility just got set up and you already have a backlog of—

Governor Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts. A year and a half.

The President. —a year and a half for folks who want to use this, creating jobs here in Massachusetts, but also creating clean energy. But we're nowhere near where we need to be. Folks are getting hammered when it comes to the cost of gas at the pump. But we go through cycles of shock when gas prices go up and then trance when they come back down, and we just keep on doing the same things that we've been doing for the last 40, 50 years.

We're—we've made enormous progress when it comes to education. My Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has been barnstorming for change all across the country. And as a result of the work that we did with No Child Left Behind, making modifications with a program called Race to the Top, we've actually seen reforms in 40 States, where suddenly folks are saying, let's bring teachers together with administrators, with parents, let's focus on accountability, let's focus on developing teachers that are excelling in front of the classrooms so that our kids can excel. And we're starting to see progress.

But we've still got so much work to do. We've still got schools where half the kids are dropping out. We're still got schools where only 1 out of 10 students can read at grade level or perform math at an acceptable level. We've got a lot more work to do.

We've made huge investments in science and research. I was just mentioning to Tom and Deval on the ride over here that the possibilities of developing an electric car that gets 300 miles a gallon, that barely uses any gasoline, that is—that could be as close as 5 years away, if we make the investments. And Japan is making the investments, South Korea is making the investments, China is making those investments, Europe is making those investments. I want what will be a revolutionary technology that will determine who basically runs the auto industry. I want that to happen here in the United States of America. So we're going to have to keep on making investments in basic research. We've got a lot more work to do.

And internationally, we've brought 100,000 troops back from Iraq. We are starting in 2 months going to be transitioning our troops out of Afghanistan. And we have put Al Qaida on its heels.

But we've got—still got enormous challenges in terms of our security. We've got enormous challenges when it comes to dealing with international issues like climate change and poverty around the world. We've got a huge stake in making sure that countries like Egypt are successful in their transition to democracy. And we have not made the kind of progress that we need to make on peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

So I hope you guys aren't tired, because what I said in 2008 remains true. What we have been able to do is to avert catastrophe. But that bigger dream, that higher mountain, we still have to climb. And it's going to require enormous effort.

And part of the reason it's going to require enormous effort is because we have an opposition party, the other side, which has just a fundamentally different vision about where America should go. And this budget debate that we're having in Washington clarifies that. I do not doubt their love for our country. I do not doubt their intentions. But they have a fundamentally different vision about how we move America forward.

And if you look at the budget documents that they've put forward, it is a small, shrunken vision of America, one in which we can't make investments in basic research, one in which we can't afford to make sure that people aren't bankrupt if they get sick, a vision that says that Medicare is voucherized and seniors may have to pay \$6,000 more per person for the health care that they receive, where we're slashing Medicaid so that poor kids or middle class families who've got a child who's autistic or some—has some other disability is not going to be cared for.

That's not the America I believe in. That's not who we are. We do big things. We are generous, and we are optimistic. And so I think this will be a very clarifying debate between now and November of next year. And I am confident that if we get our message out, that we will win. Because I think for all the distractions that the American people experience, the fact that a lot of them are too busy to pay attention to the details of politics, they've got good instincts. And they're—they remember what it took for them to achieve their American Dream. And they remember their parents or their grandparents or their great-grandparents coming over here from someplace else and having to work hard to give a better life for their kids.

And each of them have some story like Jack's story or Deval's story of coming up the hard way and working for everything you got, but knowing that if you did work hard and you met

your responsibilities, then someday you might be able to watch your grandchildren running around in a house that you couldn't have imagined having when you were a kid or being a Governor when there were no Governors like you when you were a kid. Right?

That's what this election is about. That's what this campaign is about. And so I hope that all of you are all in, because it's going to be hard. There will be some setbacks. It will be rocky occasionally. It may not have all the mystique of our first race because I'm older and grayer. [Laughter] We're not as new. But that vision is the same. My commitments are the same. And I know yours are as well.

So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 p.m. at the residence of Eileen M. and John M. Connors, Jr. In his remarks, he referred to Robert A. DeLeo, speaker, Massachusetts State House; William F. Russell, former center, National Basketball Association's Boston Celtics; and former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Brookline, MA.

Locations: Brookline, MA.

Names: Connors, Eileen M.; Connors, John M., Jr.; DeLeo, Robert A.; Duncan, Arne; Menino, Thomas M.; Patrick, Deval L.; Romney, W. Mitt; Russell, William F.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Budget, Federal : Congressional spending restraint; Budget, Federal : Fiscal year 2012; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Decline; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Improvement; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Unrest; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Developing countries : Poverty; Economy, national : American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Education : High school dropout rate; Education : No Child Left Behind Act; Education : Standards and school accountability; Education : Teachers; Education, Department of : Race to the Top Fund; Education, Department of : Secretary; Egypt : Democracy efforts; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Energy : Hybrid and alternative fuel automobiles :: Battery technology, U.S. production; Energy : Hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Environment : Climate change; Foreign policy, U.S. : Poverty, efforts to combat; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Information technology; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Housing : Housing market :: Decline; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Massachusetts : Democratic Party events; Massachusetts : Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Massachusetts : Governor; Massachusetts : President's visit; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Science and technology : Research and development; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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